

Parks, Open Space and Recreation Element

GOALS:

- To obtain land for park use that provides open space and facilities to meet the short and long term needs of the community.
- To protect and preserve open spaces that are ecologically significant sensitive areas; serve as buffers between uses and link open space; and provide trails, wildlife corridors, and greenways.
- To cooperate with other jurisdictions, public agencies, and the private sector to provide open space and recreation facilities.
- To develop, operate, and maintain parkland and cultural and recreation facilities in a manner that is responsive to the site and the needs of the community.
- To modify existing parks and recreation facilities as needed to ensure safety, accessibility, and optimum use of resources.
- To provide a variety of community services and programs that are creative, preventative, proactive, and respond to the needs of Bellevue residents.
- To provide and promote partnerships to offer a variety of community services and programs that enhance the quality of life for Bellevue residents.

OVERVIEW

The richness of Bellevue’s natural environment has long been central to the quality of life it offers. The city lies between Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish; alongside the foothills of the Cascade Mountains; and among urban forests, wetlands, and streams that support wildlife. Recognizing the uniqueness of this natural setting, park system goals respond to the vision of Bellevue as a “City in a Park.”

Open space lands are essential to the character of Bellevue. The Parks, Open Space and Recreation Element contains the policies that guide the acquisition and development of open space, and the provision of community programs and services. Bellevue’s **Park and Open Space Acquisition** policies will focus on linking existing components of the parks system, providing new recreation opportunities, and protecting environmentally sensitive areas.

Park Development, Redevelopment, and Renovation policies point to the city’s commitment to provide facilities that are responsive to community needs. Bellevue

parks will continue to offer far more than athletics. The **Community Services and Programs** section emphasizes the wide variety of education, recreation, and social opportunities for all members of the community.



Picturesque Clyde Beach Park provides the community with access to Lake Washington and waterfront activities.

As stewards of the natural environment, the city is actively pursuing a coordinated system of greenways that provide multiple benefits and functions for residents of the community. Greenways have historically provided a natural contrast to urban density. The term “greenway” evolved from greenbelt and parkway: it combines the separation and ecological functions of a greenbelt with the linear and connective orientation of a parkway. Greenways include natural areas and greenbelts that provide open space within developed areas, separate incompatible uses, and buffer busy roadways. They also provide important nonmotorized linkages between neighborhoods, schools, parks, and activity areas.

To meet the community’s Parks, Open Space, and Recreation goals, the city is dedicated to:

- Steward a coordinated system of public open spaces that preserves the city’s natural character, sustains its urban forest resources, and protects its natural systems, wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors as a legacy for future generations;
- Obtain the land necessary to provide a broad range of recreation opportunities throughout the community;
- Connect parks, neighborhoods, schools, and activity areas together through a coordinated system of trails and open spaces;
- Provide access for all of Bellevue’s residents to a variety of park facilities including waterfront, play areas, sportsfields, and recreation centers;
- Offer a variety of recreation, athletic, art, social, learning, and environmental education programs;

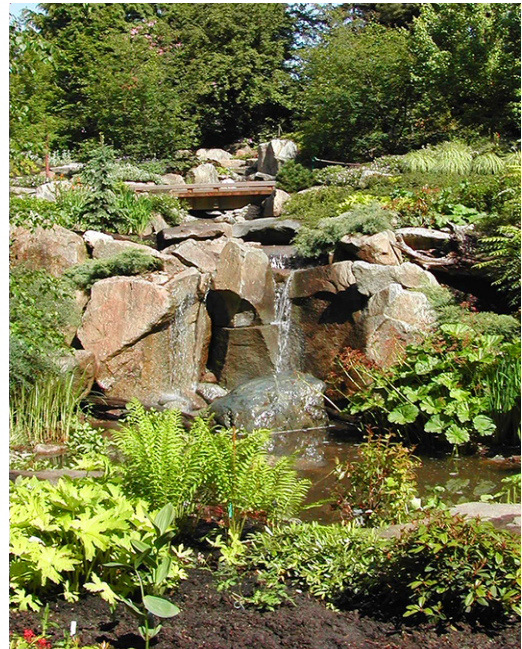
- Define and enhance neighborhood character by using open space as visual relief to separate and buffer between uses;
- Offer services and programs to all ages and segments of society that provide positive alternatives for building healthy and productive lives; and
- Collaborate with other agencies, both public and private, to efficiently meet the community's needs for parks, recreation, cultural opportunities, and open space.

To implement the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, the city has developed and periodically updates the Parks and Open Space System Plan. This functional plan provides an analysis of major park and recreation issues and describes both the short-term and the long-term strategies for addressing these issues.

Park and Open Space Acquisition

Bellevue is committed to completing its park system and to utilizing various acquisition strategies to assure that land is available to meet the city's current and future open space and facility needs. The city directs its acquisition efforts toward achieving a coordinated and connected system of open space and greenways that protects significant environmental features, preserves habitat, and provides the land needed for park-related facilities and activities. Property acquisition is often driven by availability and affordability. In order to take advantage of acquisition opportunities, strong leadership and a variety of acquisition options must be available.

The city's Parks and Open Space System Plan provides acquisition recommendations and explores alternative solutions for acquiring open space. Acquiring additional waterfront access is a high priority. Meydenbauer Bay continues to be a major focus for increasing Bellevue's access to the waterfront. Bellevue's acquisitions of key waterfront parcels along Meydenbauer Bay are evidence of this priority and of the city's commitment to providing waterfront opportunities for future generations. The immediate acquisition goal is to complete assembling the properties between Meydenbauer Beach Park and the existing city owned marina property. The ultimate goal is to connect the expansion of these properties to the Downtown area, creating a significant



The Bellevue Botanical Garden offers inspiration for gardeners.

citywide park and waterfront destination. The city is also interested in providing a Lake Sammamish waterfront park, that would accommodate swimming, picnicking, and support facilities. Topography remains a challenge to providing suitable public access to Lake Sammamish. One undeveloped parcel has been acquired, however additional parcels will need to be assembled to provide adequate space to develop a plan.

The plan for mini-parks and neighborhood parks is determined by the recreation needs of residents in the various subareas. Community and citywide parks attract visitors from throughout the area and are sited according to criteria such as population projections, the availability of large parcels, and environmental constraints.

POLICIES

POLICY PA-1. Establish a coordinated and connected system of open space and greenways throughout the city that provide multiple benefits including preserving natural systems, protecting wildlife habitat and corridors, and providing land for recreation.

POLICY PA-2. Support a region wide park and open space system.

POLICY PA-3. Obtain land throughout the community to meet present and future open space needs.

POLICY PA-4. Equitably distribute neighborhood park and recreation opportunities by type throughout the city.

POLICY PA-5. Incorporate utility, storm drainage, and other public lands into the open space system through cooperative use agreements.

POLICY PA-6. Obtain, for preservation, natural areas that are sensitive to urbanization or represent a valuable natural and aesthetic resource to the community.

POLICY PA-7. Provide additional public access to Lakes Washington and Sammamish.

POLICY PA-8. Coordinate park planning, acquisition, and development with other city projects and programs that implement the Comprehensive Plan.

POLICY PA-9. Actively pursue private dedication of land and funds for park related purposes through a variety of methods such as purchase, donation, easement, and through the development review process.

POLICY PA-10. Actively seek funding from a variety of sources to help implement a park acquisition and development program.

POLICY PA-11. Develop partnerships with school districts, other public agencies, and private groups to meet the open space and recreation needs of the city and region.

Park Development, Redevelopment and Renovation

Environmental stewardship plays a prominent role in the development, redevelopment, and renovation of parkland and facilities. Bellevue's park system development is based on two principles: first, to provide limited access to environmentally sensitive areas, and second, to provide opportunities for active recreation.

Many acres of open space in this system are never “developed” in the traditional sense. Lands characterized by steep slopes or wetlands, and areas functioning as important wildlife habitat are retained in their natural state with development limited primarily to trails. Other less sensitive areas are suitable for a wide variety of active recreation activities. Special purpose recreation facilities such as ice arenas, tennis centers, swimming pools, performing arts theaters, amphitheaters, marinas, and boat launches should be developed where appropriate.



A partnership between the school district and the city provides facilities for all.

The city promotes partnerships with other agencies, private organizations, and individuals to develop a park system that meets the needs of the residents.

Partnerships with school districts are key to providing active recreation facilities and full utilization of school fields.

Bellevue's park development plan will develop and improve connections within the city's open space system as well as with the regional system of parks and trails. The city recognizes that certain open space, recreational, and cultural needs can be most effectively and efficiently met on a regional basis. Working together to identify each jurisdiction's role and contribution to regional needs will avoid duplication of facilities and provide a greater variety of open space and recreation services.

POLICIES

POLICY PA-12. Determine the appropriate uses within natural areas based on the environmental sensitivity of the site.

POLICY PA-13. Develop pedestrian and bicycle linkages between neighborhoods and major natural areas, recreation facilities, and education centers.

POLICY PA-14. Develop partnerships with other public agencies and the private sector to meet the demand for cultural and recreational facilities in the city.

POLICY PA-15. Develop partnerships with not-for-profit organizations in planning, developing, and utilizing facilities.

POLICY PA-16. Develop partnerships with the public school districts to utilize school sites to provide active recreation and cultural facilities.

POLICY PA-17. Provide geographically dispersed community centers, using city owned facilities as well as partnerships with the school districts and other non profit agencies, to meet residents' needs for indoor recreation, athletic instruction, arts, meeting space, and special activities.

POLICY PA-18. Develop a variety of active and passive facilities in a coordinated system of neighborhood and community parks.

POLICY PA-19. Develop parks and facilities in a quality manner to assure attractiveness, full utilization, and long term efficiency.

POLICY PA-20. Promote a diversity of privately funded recreational and cultural facilities throughout the city, especially in coordination with major employment centers.

POLICY PA-21. Coordinate with other jurisdictions, including state agencies and the Port of Seattle, in the planning and development of regional greenways, parks, cultural, and recreational facilities, including the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) trail system.

POLICY PA-22. Encourage the linkage and access of private facilities with those in the public system.

POLICY PA-23. Expand and develop public waterfront sites.

POLICY PA-24. Encourage the development of facilities for special purpose recreation.

POLICY PA-25. Retain and develop underdeveloped public right-of-way for public access and passive recreation where appropriate.

POLICY PA-26. Require a public review process for the conversion to non-recreational use of lands and facilities that were acquired, purchased, and developed with voter-approved funding, CIP project funding, or private donation.

POLICY PA-27. Designate active and passive recreation uses and cultural use of parkland through the master plan approval process.

POLICY PA-28. Establish a funding plan for long term maintenance and operation before constructing park-related facilities.

POLICY PA-29. Evaluate existing parks and facilities, and renovate, where appropriate, to maximize efficient maintenance and operating practices, improve safety and accessibility for all users, and to reduce, where feasible, the impacts on adjacent properties.

POLICY PA-30. Design, construct, operate, and maintain parklands and facilities to preserve the ecology of natural systems on parklands.

POLICY PA-31. Protect and retain, in a natural state, significant trees and vegetation in publicly and privately-dedicated greenbelt areas.

POLICY PA-32. Conserve energy, water, and other natural resources, and practice efficient and environmentally responsible maintenance and operation procedures.

POLICY PA-33. Manage Bellevue's forest resources, including street trees, formal plantings, and self-sustaining natural stands, to ensure their long term vitality.



Bellevue protects the environment and natural resources such as Larsen Lake.

Community Services and Programs

In a changing urban environment, each person needs the opportunity to experience a sense of belonging in the community, to develop friendships, and to interact with people having similar interests. Bellevue's community programs and services respond to social concerns by focusing on enhancement, prevention, and intervention.

Bellevue offers a wide variety of services and programs intended to help all people within the community develop skills and have access to opportunities that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. The city places special emphasis on providing services and programs for the youth, the senior citizens, the disadvantaged, and those with disabilities. The 2000 U. S. Census data indicated Bellevue's population has increased considerably through a combination of new development and recent annexations. In addition, the 2000 Census data for Bellevue showed changing demographics, including a large increase in ethnic diversity, an increase in the senior population (65 and older), and smaller household sizes.

Developing strong partnerships with other service providers throughout the community is a key factor in meeting the city's services and program objectives.

POLICIES

POLICY PA-34. Provide a variety of services and programs throughout the city serving the general population and placing special emphasis on programs and services for youth, seniors, the disabled, and the disadvantaged.

POLICY PA-35. Promote partnerships with public and private service providers to meet cultural, recreational, and social needs of the community.

POLICY PA-36. Provide opportunities for individuals to develop a sense of community through services and programs.

POLICY PA-37. Actively solicit community input in the planning and delivery of services and programs to ensure that they are convenient and beneficial.

POLICY PA-38. Accommodate social services at recreation facilities and community centers when they complement recreational, cultural, and social programs.

POLICY PA-39. Offer programs that utilize the unique resources and variety of indoor and outdoor facilities within the park system.

POLICY PA-40. Provide a nature interpretation program to increase the community's awareness, understanding, and appreciation of natural areas.



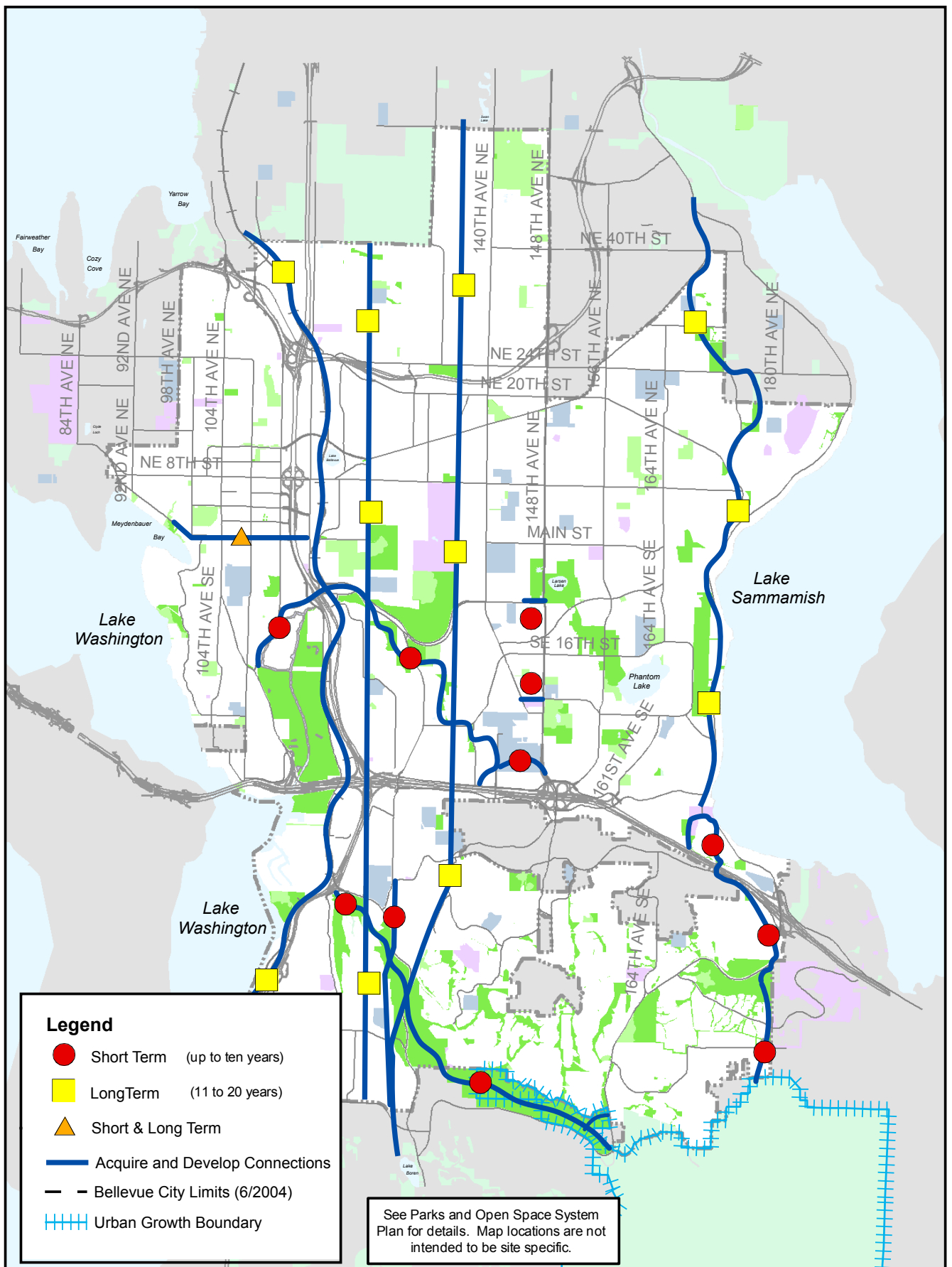


FIGURE PA.2

Open Space, Greenways & Trails Goals



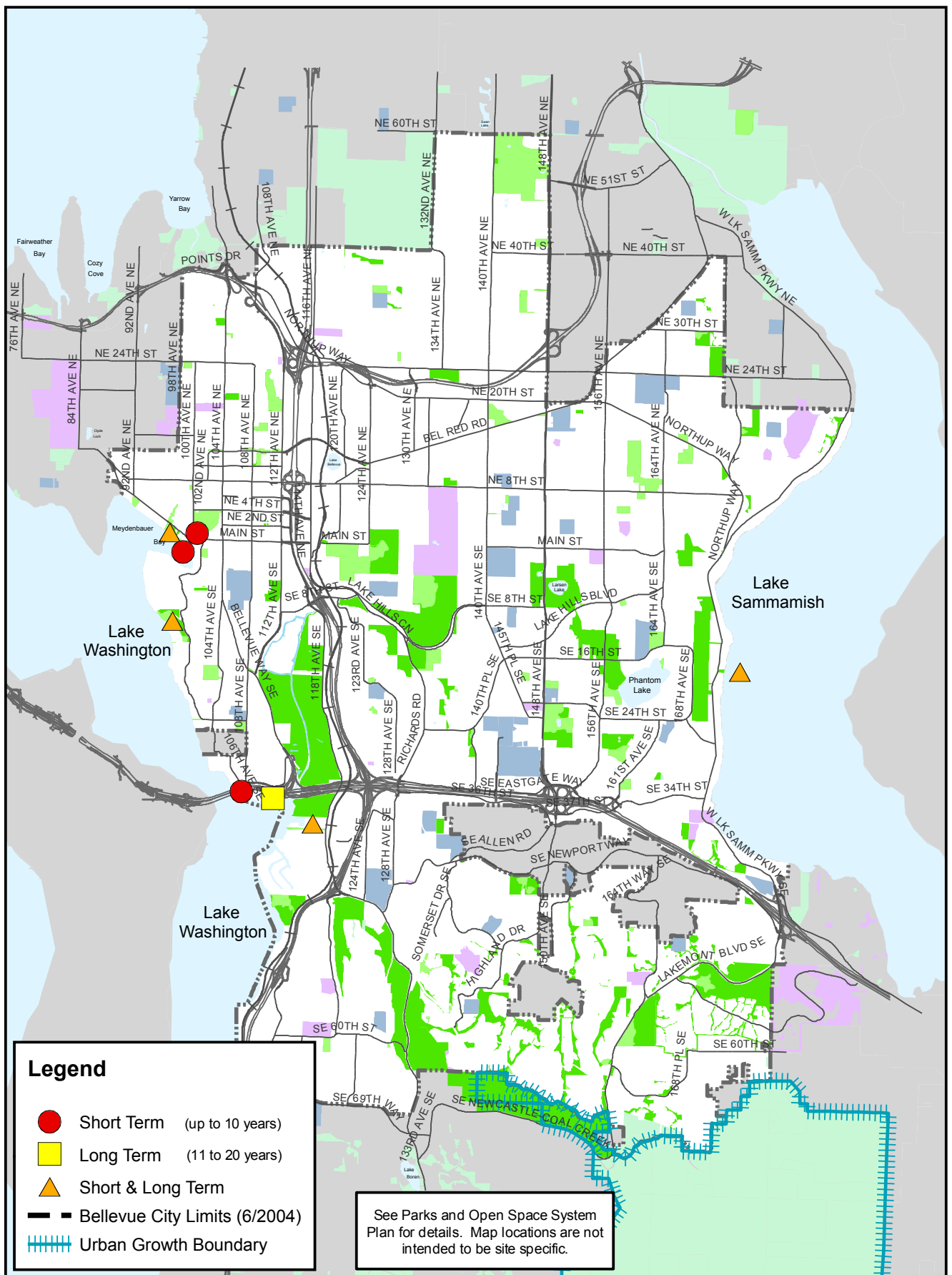


FIGURE PA.3
Waterfront Access Goals



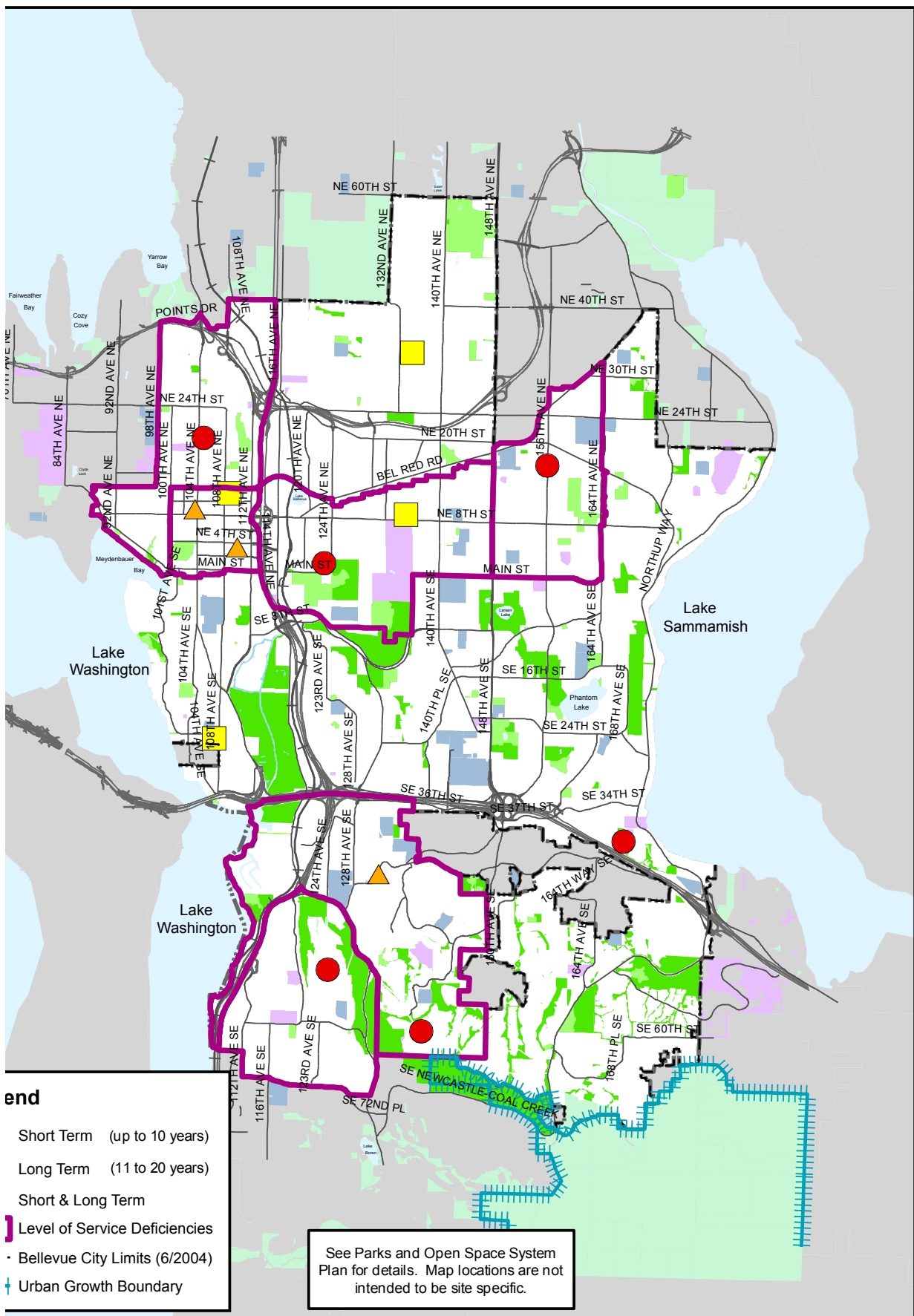


FIGURE PA.4
Neighborhood Parks Goals



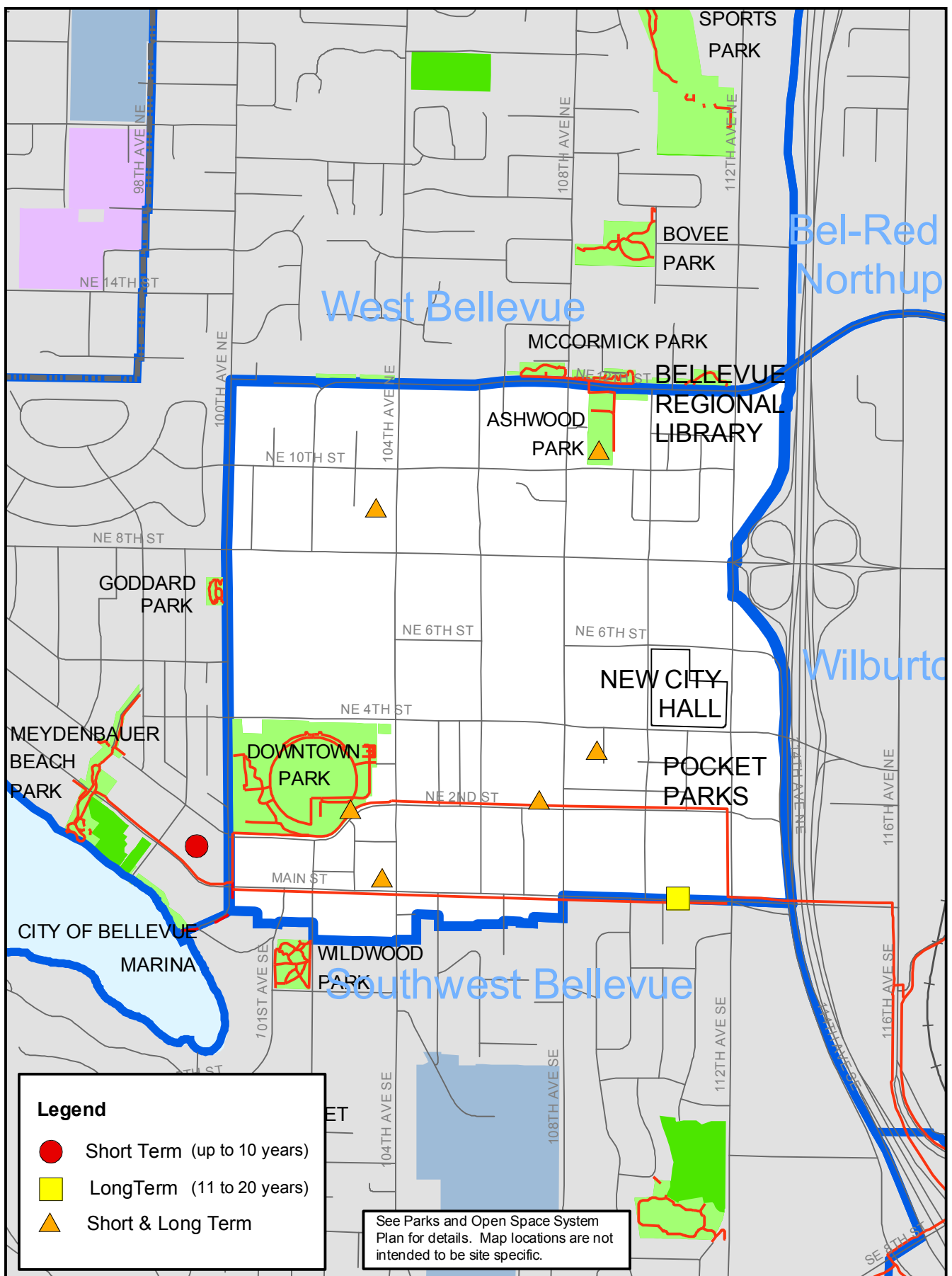


FIGURE PA.5
Downtown Area Goals



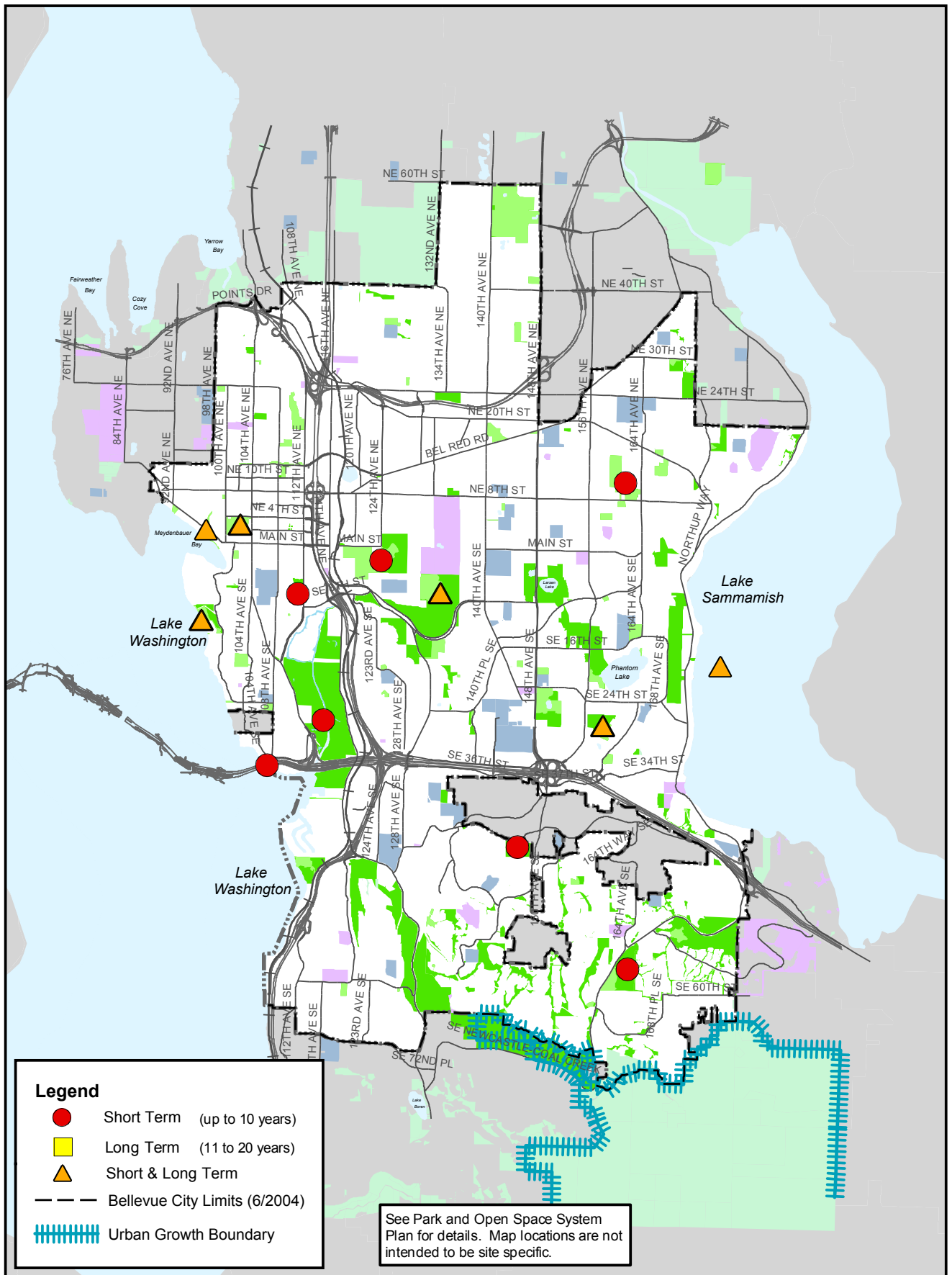


FIGURE PA.6
Community Parks Goals



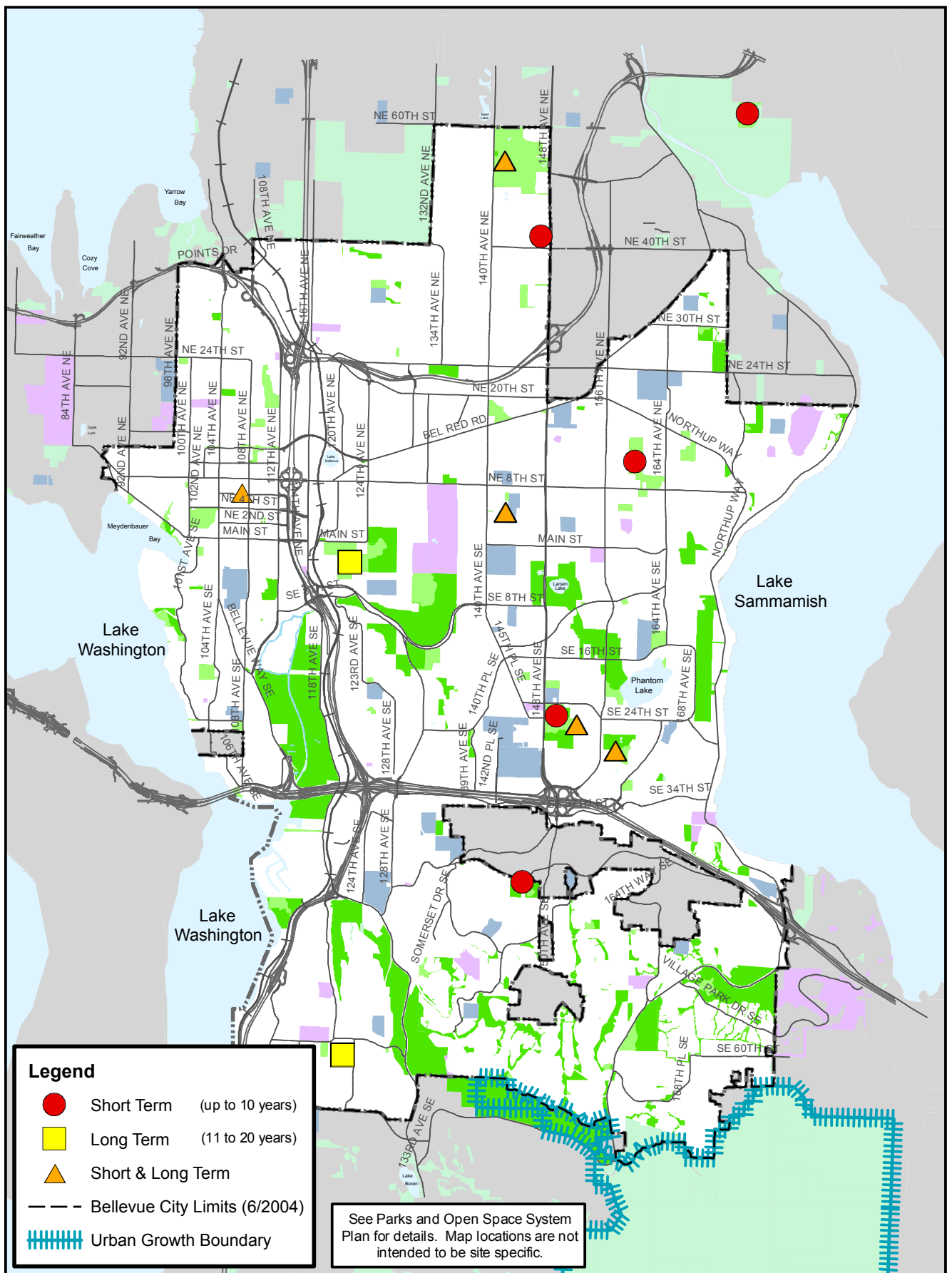


FIGURE PA.7
Recreation Facilities Goals

